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BUILDING RESILIENCE IS THE WAY FORWARD FOR POST-PANDEMIC CITIES

The World Cities Summit (WCS) 2021 received overwhelming support internationally, with some 2,500 delegates from 337 cities. The delegates connected mostly virtually to share their ideas on building a resilient city, tackling disruptions and crises, and the fundamental need for cities to take a long-term view to ensure sustainable and equitable development.

Building Resilience is Key to Way Forward

2 Panels and discussions held over the 3-day summit revealed that while COVID-19 has been a massive challenge for cities battling the virus, the scale and wide-reaching nature of the pandemic has both raised the need and created opportunities to build resilience amongst communities, businesses and government.

3 This was a sentiment reflected by Mr Desmond Lee, Minister for National Development, who delivered the keynote speech at the opening session of WCS, “An effective pandemic response requires citizens to make sacrifices, which they will only accept if they trust that these are for the greater good. Trust is hard to build but easy to lose. And a crisis can easily divide a society if everyone looks out only for themselves. To keep our people united, we need to provide regular and transparent communications, make clear decisions based on scientific and factual evidence, and fight the spread of misinformation.”

Planning for Post-Pandemic Cities

4 Participants also agreed that the pandemic has accelerated trends such as digitalisation, and the climate agenda. Cities around the world have to review their urban plans in preparation for a post-pandemic city, and the need to invest in infrastructure that is both sustainable and equitable.

5 “Adapting to crises and growing from them is a key feature of resilience, something that cities must learn to do as the challenges they face become increasingly complex. In the face of pandemics and future disruptions from climate change, it is more important than ever that cities invest in a sustainable future for the world,” said Mr Hugh Lim, Executive Director of the Centre for Liveable Cities (CLC), a co-organiser of the WCS.

6 “We are encouraged by the success of our first hybrid WCS, which received a record number of delegates attending in person and connecting remotely, from all over the world. In fact, we saw a 40% increase in participation compared to the previous World Cities Summit held in 2018! This is testament to how cities around the globe are interested in developing a healthy planet for future generations. We are looking forward to hearing more insights and ideas during the WCS webinars happening from July to November 2021. Given the positive response and feedback from participants over the hybrid format, we will certainly consider retaining parts of the hybrid format even if we convene in-person next year,” he added.

Continuing Programme for WCS 2021

7 WCS 2021 will continue with a series of webinars from July to November 2021. Mayors and thought leaders will discuss topics such as transforming cities through technology, planning for climate-ready cities and how to build healthy and happy cities. The inaugural WCS Smart Cities Workshop which will connect mentor cities, solution providers and financial institutions with prospective smart city projects will be held on 29 July.

8 WCS 2022 aims to convene in Singapore on 17 – 21 April 2022, during which the Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize 2020 will be presented. Together with Singapore International Water Week (SIWW) and CleanEnviro Summit Singapore (CESG), the three events will be held at the Sands Expo & Convention Centre, subject to prevailing COVID-19 guidelines.